

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
200 South Sixth Street
Richmond
Wayne County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-112

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. IND.-112

BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Location: 200 South Sixth Street, southwest corner of South Sixth and South B Streets, Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana

USGS Richmond Quadrangle Map, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16.680170.44.0330

Present Owner and Occupant: Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Present Use: Religious services and church offices

Statement of Significance: Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (Bethel A.M.E.) Church was founded in 1836 by William Paul Quinn, nationally prominent Afro Methodist minister. It is the oldest Afro Methodist congregation in Indiana. The structure was erected in 1854 by the German Methodist Church, transferred to the Hicksite Friends in 1857, and became the property of Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1868. Since Richmond was a stronghold in Indiana for free blacks during the nineteenth century, the church served as a social, cultural, educational as well as religious center for the black community. Originally, the building was simply appointed with classical details. In 1892, it was remodeled and enlarged by the Bethel A.M.E. congregation, transforming it to a more ornate structure of Romanesque Revival and neo-classical character. The structure is representative of the black community's affluence in the late nineteenth century and is an important symbol of the black man's status.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1854; remodeled and enlarged 1892-94.
2. Architect: No information available.

3. Original and subsequent owners: Bethel A.M.E. Church is located east of lot 45 on unplatted ground in the original plat of Richmond, at the corner of Sixth and B Streets. The German Methodist Church built the church in 1854. When they merged with an English Methodist congregation, the German Methodists transferred the church to the Hicksite Friends in 1857. The Friends in turn gave the church to Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1868 upon the completion of their new meetinghouse.

In 1869, a Deed of June 8, 1869, recorded in the Office of the Recorder Wayne County, Indiana in Book 46, page 414 stated: "The Trustees of the German Methodist Episcopal Church sold lot 45 and the land on which the church stands to the Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church for \$3500."

Apparently, the structure was given to the Hicksite Friends and Bethel A.M.E. congregations. The Trustees of the Bethel A.M.E. Church subsequently purchased the land upon which the church stands after the building had been passed to them.

4. Original plan and construction: The original church was a rectangular one-story brick structure with simple Greek Revival details. Although extensively remodeled, this is now the eastern section of the present church and used as the vestibule facing on Sixth Street. The original entrance doors have been replaced by three large windows and triple windows over the altar and pulpit have been replaced by double doors leading into the 1892 addition. Original ash floors are now covered with linoleum.
5. Alterations and additions: Due to the 1892 remodeling, today the building is cruciform-shaped and approximately twice the size of the original structure. The wings, added to the west (rear) end of the original church, form the cruciform plan. The 1854 structure is the shaft of the cross with the addition as the arms. A three-story entry and bell tower was built on the north elevation at the northeast corner of the intersection of the original section (shaft) and the north section (arm) of the 1892 addition.

The original entry on the east elevation was replaced by triple-arched Palladian-like stained glass windows, with rounded drip molding above the openings. Also, the north and south elevations of the addition have Palladian-like

triple-arched windows with rounded drip moldings. Triple-hung sash stained glass windows were inserted into openings on both the north and south elevations of the 1864 structure. A window on the west elevation of the original structure was removed and replaced by large doors opening into the 1892 addition.

The new wing was designed with Romanesque Revival details and carried over to the original section. The round triple-arched windows and drip moldings around the windows, fenestration on the tower, and the stolid, almost bulky massing of the sections are clearly characteristic of late nineteenth century Romanesque architecture in America.

A further addition to the west (rear) section was completed at a more recent date, enlarging the sanctuary and providing additional office space.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

WILLIAM PAUL QUINN

William Paul Quinn was the founder of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Richmond, Indiana. He was the son of a Spanish-Honduran-Irish father and Sudanese mother, and an immigrant to the United States in 1800. [The 1865 Directory and Soldiers' Register of Wayne County stated that Quinn was born in Hindustan on January 1, 1813. However, the course of his subsequent career indicates that he was probably born prior to 1800 and not an emigre from Hindustan.]

After an early alliance for a short period with Elias Hicks, dissident Quaker minister of national prominence who preached that salvation is within man, and opposed evangelical doctrines of salvation, Quinn united with the Afro Methodist Church. He was one of the first Methodist exhorters to follow Richard Allen in organizing a black Methodist church. Quinn was soon allowed to teach, and, in 1835, at the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, he was appointed a missionary for the black people in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. In September 1836, Quinn organized the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Richmond, the first black church in Indiana. Between 1836 and 1852 he founded 49 churches, from Louisville, Kentucky to Detroit, St. Louis and Chicago. During the 1840s and 50s these churches served not only as places of worship, but also as social, cultural and educational centers for free blacks and shelters for fugitive slaves.

As a community founded and largely populated by Quakers who were tolerant of the black man's plight during the nineteenth century, Richmond had one of the strongest free black communities in the Midwest. For this reason, Quinn established his permanent residence in Richmond in 1839. He was elected Fourth Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 and was a principal agent in the founding of Wilberforce University in Ohio. Quinn lived at 317-19 South Third Street in 1845-65, and 221 South Sixth Street from 1865 until his death in February 1873.

JAMES W. TOWNSEND

Reverend Townsend was a prominent black and served as a pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church while the extensive alterations and additions to the building were being completed in 1892-94. He was appointed pastor in 1891 after resigning his position as Recorder of Deeds in the General Land Office at Washington, D. C., a political appointment by President Benjamin Harrison. Before his Washington appointment, Townsend was the elected Representative from Wayne County to the Indiana Legislature and had retained his permanent residence in Richmond since 1880.

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In 1836, upon the church's organization, William Paul Quinn appointed George Black the church's scribe. His records serve as the basis of its history throughout the first twenty-five years. In 1837, a two-story frame warehouse was moved from its original site to a lot which was given to the African Methodist congregation and renovated into their church and school. William Paul Quinn dedicated the church in October, 1837, making it the first black church in Indiana. Since blacks were not permitted to attend schools in the Midwest in the first half of the nineteenth century, the church served as an educational and social facility for free blacks.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: None.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

J. P. Henning, "Brief History of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church." n.p., n.d.

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form,
prepared July, 1975.

Office of the Recorder, Deed Books, Richmond, Wayne
County, Indiana.

b. Secondary and published sources:

City Planning Associates, Richmond, Indiana Historical
Development. Mishawaka, Indiana; 1969.

History of Wayne County, Indiana. Chicago: Interstate
Publishing Company, 1884.

Power, S.C., ed. Directory and Soldiers' Register of
Wayne County. Richmond, Indiana, 1865.

Prepared by Robert Brueggemann
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1974

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The original 1854 structure was simply appointed with Greek Revival details. During its remodeling in 1892, the character of the church was changed by using Romanesque Revival and neo-classical details. It is an important example of a building used as a social, educational and religious center for the free black community during the nineteenth century. As a substantial work of architecture, A.M.E. Church is significant as a symbol of the black man's status and affluence at the turn of the century.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The cruciform church measures 55'-6" x 122'-6". It is one story with a partially exposed basement. There is a three-story entrance tower on the north elevation and a one-story wing on the west (rear) elevation.

2. Foundations: Rock-faced ashlar in 10-inch courses. The east (front) foundation wall is concrete. The entire foundation is painted white.
3. Wall construction finish, and color: Red brick laid in running bond.
4. Structural system and framing: Load bearing brick walls with wooden joists and rafters. Roof pitch and nave spans indicate wooden roof trusses above the ceiling, though inaccessible. Brick buttresses are bonded into the south and north exterior walls of the addition, strengthening the weight support system.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The concrete deck at the north entrance, approached by seven concrete steps, has an ornamental iron railing. Access to the basement is by concrete steps on the east elevation.
6. Chimneys: A square brick chimney pierces the roofline at the southwest corner.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main doorway is located in a shed-roofed wing on the tower. The double doors have a flush concrete lintel painted white. There are separate doors into the rear office wing and the basement.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The east, north and south facades have arched tripartite (Palladian-like) windows with stained glass. The windows are framed by brick voussoirs and molded stone trim. The rectangular stained glass windows on the north and south elevations have stone lintels and rock-faced stone sills. All wooden trim and stone work is painted white.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Two intersecting gable roofs in cruciform plan covered with asphalt shingles. There are two gable roofs over the extended sanctuary and shed roofs on the office wings.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Eaves are flush with the wall surface and have narrow molded cornice. All trim is painted white.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The three-story rectangular brick entrance tower was added on the north side in 1892. The pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt shingles. There are two small pointed-arch windows with stained glass and one small rectangular window on the north side for the tower staircase. A wide cornice divides the second and third-story levels. There are two arched openings on each side at the top level.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Access to the partial basement is by enclosed stairs on each side of the narthex. A meeting room on the east side extends the full width with outside access to the street by stairs.
 - b. First floor: The original section (the east shaft of the cruciform plan) now serves as the vestibule and the 1892 addition is used for the congregation's hall and sanctuary. Since the entrance to the original section on the east elevation was replaced by triple-arched windows in 1892, the entrance is now through the three-story tower on the north elevation. This entry opens into a vestibule from which another door leads into the narthex. Stairs to the basement are in the narthex, one flight on each side of the space. The nave is to the west of the narthex, connected by a pair of doors. The nave area, the west section of the building, is divided into the congregation's hall, sanctuary, pulpit, altar and offices. The pews for the congregation appear to be from 1892 remodeling. The floor of the pew area slopes from east to west toward the altar and pulpit. The sanctuary, altar and pulpit are located in a recessed ogee-arched area at the center of the west end. The altar and pulpit are twentieth century additions. The church offices are at the far west end of the nave, behind the altar, and were added at a more recent date.
2. Stairways: Two enclosed stairs lead to the basement, one a straight flight, the other turns 90 degrees.
 3. Flooring: Concrete in the basement, carpeting over white oak in the nave, and linoleum over ash flooring in the narthex.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster with the exception of plywood panelling and wainscoting in the smaller rooms.

5. Doorways and doors: The double doors into the nave are wide with twenty molding panels in six tiers. The other doors have five molded panels in three tiers. Doorways are surrounded by molded architraves with corner blocks. All wood is stained a dark brown.
6. Special decorative features, trim, cabinet work: Window trim matches the door trim. The nave ceiling has two inclined beams springing from each wall towards a center square of beams. The sanctuary is recessed with a concave back wall and pointed-arch opening.
7. Hardware: The nave doors have mortise locks with brass knobs decorated with a floral motif.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building sits on the corner lot of a low-income residential neighborhood.
2. Historic Landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.

Prepared by Mort Karp
Project Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1974

Edited by Jan Cigliano
Architectural Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
October 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. The structure was recorded in the summer of 1974 under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Associate Professor Mort Karp (University of Arkansas), with Architect Harry Hunderman (University of Michigan), student assistant architects, Scott Bernard (University of Pennsylvania),

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Mark Hall (Pennsylvania State University), Richard Perlmutter (Yale University), and architectural historian Robert Bruegmann (University of Pennsylvania), at the HABS Field office, Earlham College, Wayne County, Richmond, Indiana. The data was edited and expanded in HABS office by Jan E. Cigliano, staff historian. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in 1975.

ADDENDUM TO
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